In the Claims:

Kindly amend the claims as follows:

Kindly cancel without prejudice Claims 18 and 19.

1. (Currently Amended) Process for preparing alkali- and heat-stable sugar alcohol compositions which exhibits an optical density lower than or equal to 0.100 ~~0,100~~ in an S-test, characterised in that a sugar alcohol composition is treated with a strong base anion exchange resin in the hydroxide form, at a temperature between 30 °C and 100 °C.

2. (Original) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that in said process the sugar alcohol composition is fed to a column-system containing a strong base anion exchange resin in the hydroxide form with a volume throughput of = 6 bed volumes (BV)/hour.

3. (Original) Process according to claim 2, characterised in that a single column-system is used.

4. (Original) Process according to claim 2, characterised in that a multiple column-system is used, in which at least part of the columns of the system is used in a regeneration mode, while the remaining columns are used in a service mode, comprising the steps of stabilisation and simultaneous decolourisation.

5. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 2, characterised in that the volume throughput is between 0.1 ~~0,1~~ and 1 BV/hour.

6. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 5, characterised in that the volume throughput is between 0.2 ~~0,2~~ and 0.8 ~~0,8~~ BV/hour.

7. (Previously Presented) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said sugar alcohol composition has a conductivity value less than 100 µS/cm before treatment with the strong base anion exchange resin.

8. (Original) Process according to claim 7, characterised in that said sugar alcohol composition has a conductivity less then 50 μS/cm before treatment with the strong base anion exchange resin.

9. (Previously Presented) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said strong base anion exchange resin belongs to the thermally stable-type category.

10. (Previously Presented) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said strong base anion exchange resin is of the styrenic type I, type II or type III.

11. (currently amended) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said strong base anion exchange resin is of the acrylic resin type.

12. (currently amended) Process according to claim 10, characterised in that when using a styrenic type I or type III, or an acrylic type resin, a column temperature is used between 45 °C and 70 °C.

13. (Original) Process according to claim 11, characterised in that when using a styrenic type II resin, a column temperature is used which is less than 45 °C.

14. (Original) Process according to claim 10, characterised in that when using a thermally stable resin, a column temperature is used which is more than 75 °C.

15. (Previously Presented) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said sugar alcohol composition is prepared by hydrogenating a starch hydrolysate, obtained from an acid conversion, a combined acid-enzymatic conversion or a multiple enzyme conversion of starch.

16. (Previously Presented) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said sugar alcohol composition is prepared by hydrogenating reducing sugars belonging to the

categories of keto- or aldopentoses, keto- or aldohexoses, disaccharides or non-starch oligosaccharide mixtures.

17. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterised in that said sugar alcohol composition has a pH-value between 8.5 ~~8,5~~ and 9.5 ~~9,5~~ when sorting from the strong base anion exchange resin.

18. (Cancelled Without Prejudice)

19. (Cancelled Without Prejudice)